

CRESCENT BOULEVARD BRIDGE NO. 0406153  
(Cooper River Bridge)  
Crescent Boulevard (US 130/30) over Cooper River  
Collingswood  
Camden County  
New Jersey

HAER No. NJ-115

HAER  
NJ,  
4-COLWO,  
3-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD  
National Park Service  
Philadelphia Support Office  
U.S. Custom House  
200 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19106

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Location:

Crescent Boulevard (US 130/30) over Cooper River  
Collingswood  
Camden County, New Jersey

UTM Coordinates: 18.492080.4419420

USGS Quad: Camden, New Jersey-Pennsylvania, 1:24,000

Date of Construction:

1926

Engineer, etc.:

New Jersey State Highway Department

Present Owner:

Camden County, Camden County Park Department

Present Use:

Vehicular and pedestrian bridge

Significance:

The bridge is a contributing element of the Cooper River Park, a landscaped recreational area stretching both north and south along the Cooper River. Crescent Boulevard is historically regarded as the dividing line between the east and west portions of the park, with the bridge providing access over the river.

Project Information Statement:

An evaluation for a transportation project (1995) will result in replacement of the bridge's superstructure. To mitigate the adverse effect, the State Historic Preservation Office stipulated documentation and replication of design elements on the new bridge. This documentation was undertaken to fulfill the first stipulation.

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Centre Hall, PA 16828

### Summary Description of Bridge and Setting

This bridge carries Crescent Boulevard (US 130/30) over Cooper River, the municipal division between the Borough of Collingswood, Pennsauken Township, and the City of Camden, New Jersey. Cooper River Park, including 284 acres, extends along both sides of the river in this area. The intersection of the boulevard and the river divides the park into four quadrants. The bridge carrying the boulevard over the river provides the main access from the northern portions of the park to the southern portions.

The bridge measures approximately 225' by approximately 75' (each approximately 90') and has two spans supported by an encased steel stringer. The superstructure consists of concrete balustrades and paneled fascia. Abutments and wing walls are composed of horizontally-scored concrete. Although the structure is a common state highway bridge design, it provides an important function in the movement of automobile and pedestrian traffic between the north and south sides of the park. Recent modifications/additions to the bridge include the installation of modern beam guide rails at all but the northeast quadrant of the bridge as part of a highway improvement project, which also added a sign bridge over the highway approximately 150 feet south of the bridge. Also, erosion of the shoreline around the bridge resulted in the addition of timber bulkheads to extend the bridge's wing walls to prevent erosion of backfill from behind the bridge.

Constructed in 1926, the Crescent Boulevard Bridge was part of the greater Camden Extension project, in progress from 1924 to 1929. Crescent Boulevard (originally Route 45, but presently US 130) was designed specifically to funnel traffic through the Camden area directly to the newly-constructed Camden-Philadelphia Bridge (now the Ben Franklin Bridge) into Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. The construction of the Camden-Philadelphia Bridge was just the first component of a larger economic effort called the Greater Camden Movement. This movement ultimately developed a master plan for county public services including roads, parks, and education in the Camden area.

Early automobile traffic in Camden's outlying areas often backed up at local intersections causing gridlock. Roadways, originally constructed for use by horse-drawn traffic, could not adequately handle the larger, heavier, and faster motorized vehicles. The situation was even worse in the city of Camden, where traffic would back up along the approach to ferries used to transport it across the Delaware River to Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. To relieve the congestion and to spur the economic growth of the area, a movement was started as early as 1908 to construct a bridge across the river to facilitate the movement of traffic into and out of the city.

Construction of the bridge commenced in 1922. In 1926, the Camden-Philadelphia Bridge was completed.<sup>1</sup>

It was apparent that local roads would not be able to deal with the increased traffic associated with the new bridge. Existing roads in the area were incapable of handling such heavy traffic volumes, as well as being too narrow, poorly drained, dangerously aligned, and inadequately marked. To ease new traffic pattern problems caused by the bridge, the State Highway Department devised plans for a modern through highway. This highway, originally planned in 1924 (redesigned in 1926) and called the Camden Extension, was designed to separate local traffic from through traffic headed to and from Philadelphia to eliminate interference from city streets. The highway was one of New Jersey's first multi-lane motorways designed exclusively for automobile traffic.

The New Jersey State Highway Department worked with an Advisory Board composed of Camden County officials to design a highway route to fill the needs of both agencies. The Advisory Board envisioned a parkway with a multi-lane extensively-landscaped thoroughfare on both sides of the Cooper River to be called the Cooper River Parkway. In 1925, the board hired noted landscape architects and parkway designer Charles W. Leavitt and Son of New York City to design the new highway. The highway was to run parallel to the river on each side. However, the State Highway Department had other plans. The route chosen for the highway ran not parallel to the river but perpendicular to it.<sup>2</sup> The highway crossed the river on the Crescent Boulevard Bridge, which was constructed in 1926. Although the Camden Extension effectively divided the planned park into four separate quadrants by acting as a visual and physical barrier, the Crescent Boulevard Bridge served to provide access to each of them.

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<sup>1</sup> The Camden-Philadelphia Bridge was renamed the Ben Franklin Bridge in 1955.

<sup>2</sup> In the 1930s, only portions of Leavitt's parkway were seen to completion. These portions consist of the present North Park Drive and South Park Drive, which parallel the Cooper River and form the northern and southern limits of the Cooper River Park.

Bibliography

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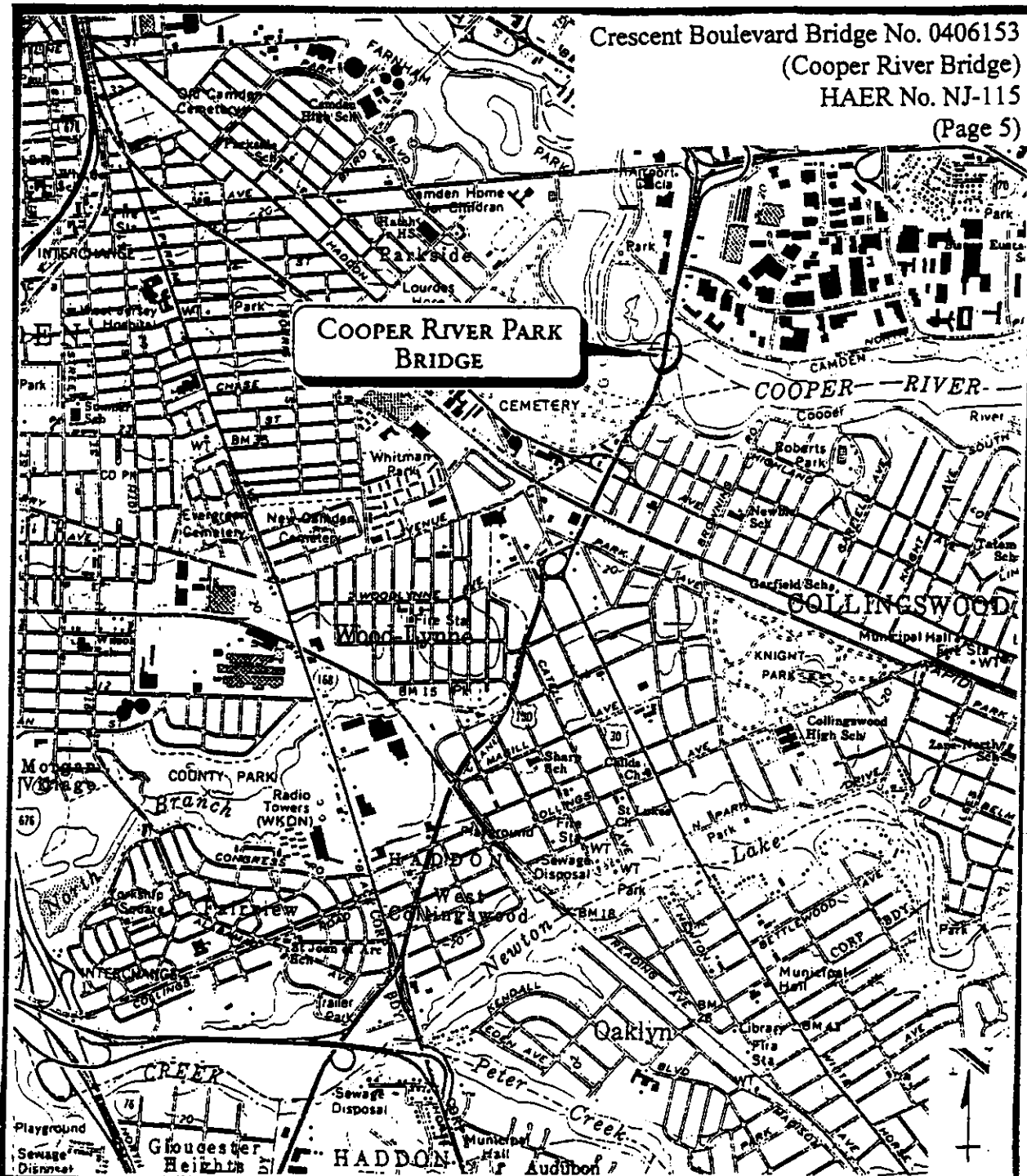
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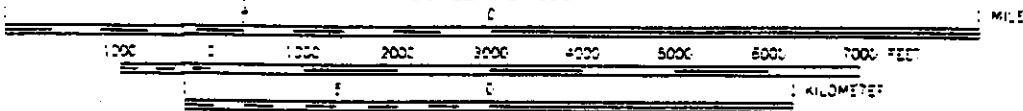
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COOPER RIVER PARK  
 BRIDGE

SCALE 1:24 000



CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET

Camden, NJ-PA  
 1967 (PR 1994)